

leadership instalments

HIRING THE RIGHT PEOPLE

By Dan Gaynor

EACH TIME YOU BRING SOMEONE NEW ONTO YOUR TEAM you will strengthen or weaken it. The team will not remain just as it was. Selecting the right person improves the team through an injection of skills, energy and passion. The right person will motivate improved performance from others. Make the wrong selection and you may face a costly setback. So it makes sense to take care with the selection of people. Here are some practical steps you can take to get more of these decisions right:

1. Insist on a cultural fit.

Most leaders pay a lot of attention to skills and experience and very little to cultural fit. I treated skills as the price of entry and culture as a key factor in the selection. To pick an easy target, if your organization routinely expects employees to work long hours, and you don't make this clear, you may end up with a new employee who wants more time for recreation and family than your company is prepared to provide. When this becomes clear you'll have a new employee who is discouraged and maybe even angry and team mates will hear about it. So make sure the way your company is marketed – and this includes the interview process – is consistent with the experience you deliver. If it's not, you'll end up with high turnover and low productivity.

2. Look for a personal style fit.

The fit between the candidate and the leader is also critical, so once again, be candid about your leadership style. Spend some time talking about what you expect of each member of your team and about what the candidate can expect of you. Be honest about the type of relationship you expect. Once again, if the fit is wrong it won't work.

3. Focus the conversation on experience and not beliefs:

Learning how to ask the right questions is important to finding the right people. You must start with an understanding that character doesn't change much, so you will get a lot more of what people have done than you will of what they say they will do. If you want to know how they'll perform for you find out how they've performed elsewhere. Look for real examples of how they've handled conflict; worked on teams; cared for difficult customers or demonstrated initiative (one of my favourites)...you get the idea. Pick the characteristics

that are important to you then ask them to describe actual situations and insist on detail. Each time someone responds with "I believe" stop them and insist on an actual example.

4. Take the observer's seat for one interview.

Let someone else conduct one interview while you listen, and discipline yourself to stay in the observer's seat. This has two benefits: Everyone asks somewhat different questions so you'll get another perspective and when you don't have to ask the questions, you'll

be able to listen more intently. You'll hear more and learn more. The risks and rewards of hiring are significant so make every effort to get each one of these decisions right. And one more thing – don't rush. If you don't have confidence in the best candidate you've interviewed, wait and keep searching. Bringing new people on to your team is one of the fastest ways to build a team when you get these key decisions right.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **When was the last time you hired the wrong person? Where did you go wrong?**
2. **How would you describe your organization's culture and your leadership style to a candidate?**
3. **Which personal characteristics are most important to you in the members of your team and what are the best questions to ask about them?**

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